



## Watersheds

A watershed is the land that water flows across or under on its way to a stream, river or lake and is nature's way of dividing up the landscape. New England includes many eco-systems that, by virtue of their ecological value, recreational value, or proximity to large populations, hold a special significance to us. EPA New England is focusing particular attention and resources on these special places. Working closely with our federal, state and local partners, these community based initiatives are delivering tangible environmental improvements to these watershed areas.

### ►EPA Contact

Rob Adler  
(617) 918-1396  
adler.robert@epa.gov



**Customer Call Center**  
**888-372-7341**  
**www.epa.gov/region1**

Fact Sheet/June 2002

# South County RI Watersheds



## Progress/Goals for the Future

### What Progress has Been Made?

- Green Hill Pond total maximum daily load (TMDL) preliminary monitoring and data assessment was completed. Final recommendations are being drafted.
- South Kingstown adopted a wastewater management program supported by EPA to inspect 6,000 septic systems, adopt performance standards and phase out cesspools and failing systems. Green Hill Pond is first priority. Program manager was hired.
- Queen-Usquepaugh Rivers habitat assessment is drafted and being published. A flow model is being developed on stream flow effects from withdrawals.
- South County Design Manual* was published for creative land use options in managing growth.
- 40 local meetings were held on 'green space' project to map natural and cultural resources for preservation. Comp plans and ordinances were reviewed.

### What Major Actions are Planned for 2002?

- Conservation Development Manual* to be published to assist local boards in considering natural and cultural resources in site plan development.
- Installation and monitoring of 12 enhanced on-site septic systems in Charlestown and S. Kingstown-Green Hill Pond in a demonstration to improve water quality discharges.
- A water resources flow optimization study for the Pawcatuck watershed to assess flows and predict water availability is funded for the first year.

(continued)

### What Makes the South County Watersheds Special?

- Spans 300 square miles of four coastal draining watersheds: Narrow River, Pawcatuck River, Salt Ponds and Saugatucket River, with 11 southern RI communities.
- It is remarkably rural and country-like, with high bio-diversity. 85% of RI's globally rare species and 65% of RI's rare and unique natural communities are very sensitive to human disturbance.
- Home of Narragansett Tribe and the highest concentration of turf (sod) farms in the U.S.

### Why Do Waters of South County Need Special Attention?

- Development pressures are among the highest in New England. Fragmentation and nonpoint pollution threaten resources, farms, open space and 'country way of life.'
- Stream withdrawals to irrigate golf courses and turf crops may threaten water resources and natural habitats.
- Groundwater supplies 100% of the drinking water and are designated as "sole source" aquifers by EPA.
- Although the region is fairly rural, segments of the Narrow, Saugatucket and Pawcatuck Rivers, do not meet state water quality standards.
- Coastal ponds' water quality, shellfish and eel grass beds are threatened.

# South County RI Watersheds



## Watersheds

### What are the South County Watershed Organizations and Collaboration?

Watershed programs and organizations continue to mature and evolve. The RI Rivers Council has designated two watershed councils in the South County region: Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association and the Saugatucket River Heritage Corridor Coalition. Along with the Narrow River Preservation Association and the Salt Ponds Coalition, these organizations and partners have each developed action plans that identify key issues and actions. Action teams have been established. For example, in the Salt Ponds region, a group was formed that includes the Salt Ponds Coalition, URI Watershed Watch, GSO, and Cooperative Extension, with RI DEM and EPA New England that will collaborate on focused water quality monitoring.

South County town governments are increasingly engaged in the preservation of their natural resources and their 'country way of life'. Town Council representatives have organized under the Washington County Regional Planning Council to address local resource and land management issues and encourage a regional perspective.

### Who are the Partners?

EPA New England • Southern Rhode Island Conservation District • Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association • 14 Towns in Pawcatuck Watershed • Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management • Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection • Rural Lands Coalition • Salt Ponds Coalition • The Nature Conservancy • USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service • US Geologic Survey • URI Cooperative Extension Service • Trout Unlimited • Audubon Society of Rhode Island • Narragansett Indian Tribe • URI Coastal Resources Center • URI Watershed Watch • Mashantucket Pequot Tribe • Rhode Island Geographic Information Systems • The Rhode Island Natural History Survey • s Narrow River Preservation Association • Saugatucket River Heritage Corridor Coalition



#### Legend

- Surface Water
- Rivers
- Washington ("South") County and Pawcatuck Watershed
- State Boundary
- Town Boundary

Data Sources: Political boundaries from RIGIS, CT DEP and MassGIS at 1:24,000. Surface water from USGS at 1:100,000. Watershed boundaries from RIGIS at 1:24,000. February 5, 2001



#### ►Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association Contact

Lori Urso, Executive Director  
(401) 539-9017  
<http://www.wpwa.org>

#### ►Saugatucket River Heritage Corridor Coalition, Inc.

Dorothy Devine, President  
(401) 782-0149  
<http://www.saugatucket.org>

#### ►Narrow River Preservation Association

Tony Lachowicz, Executive Director  
(401) 783-6277  
<http://www.narrowriver.org>

#### ►Salt Ponds Coalition

Vic Dvorak, Executive Director  
(401) 322-1105  
<http://www.saltpondscoalition.org>



Customer Call Center 888-372-7341 • [www.epa.gov/region1](http://www.epa.gov/region1)

Note: EPA-New England offers businesses and municipalities information and assistance to improve compliance with environmental laws and be better stewards of their local environment. Please call to learn how EPA can help.

Printed on 100% recycled/recyclable paper with a minimum 50% post-consumer fiber using vegetable-based ink